"Please mom? Can you please download it at home?": Video Games as a Symbol of Linguistic Survivance

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Recently, there has been an increase in video games that are made by or in collaboration with Indigenous people, for example Elizabeth LaPensée's *Survivance*, Chelsea Vowel's *Idle No More: Blockade*, Minority Media's *Spirits of Spring*, and Upper One Games' *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa* (*Never Alone*). Indigenous people's direct involvement in the development of these video games exemplifies how Indigenous people are in control of digital media that represents their own communities and identities. For example, *Survivance* asks players to create an expression of their own Indigeneity through lessons and quests. *Idle No More* is an RPG game that stresses cultural relevance and highlights issues that many Indigenous communities face, such as land expropriation and cultural stereotyping. *Spirits of Spring* explores an Indigenous boy's experiences of bullying. *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa* invites players to explore Iñupiaq stories and life in the arctic. Within the context of the growing movement of Indigenous video games, the Splatsin Tsm7aksaltn (Splatsin Teaching Centre) of the Splatsin First Nation have decided to create a video game in order to revitalize their language and culture. We are part of a research team including community members and academics who are working towards developing this video game. The video game is being developed as a platformer game that is based on Splatsin's oral stories.

As part of the game's development, a community meeting was held to discuss and play a wide range of video games in order to get the community's opinion on what makes a good video game. This meeting highlighted the importance of traditional storytelling in the community as well as the strength of story in videogames. In this paper, we examine Indigenous storytelling through the medium of video games, specifically through the game *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*. *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa* exemplifies an impactful reimagining of Indigenous oral storytelling through the medium of video games. Also, using comments from the community meeting, we examine how

Indigenous video games support relationality and how technology is implicated in shaping, or shifting, iterations of traditional and ancestral ways of being of Indigenous communities, such as Splatsin. At the community meeting, the stsmamlt (children) and parents were engaged in the immersive Iñupiaq narrative of the video game *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*. During the meeting, stsmamlt, who were the players, played through the Iñupiaq narrative and interacted with the game world, while parents, who were observers, engaged with their stsmamlt and commented on the game's narrative and the reality it presented. Since the stsmamlt and parents came together and identified strongly with representations of an Indigenous group's language and culture in a videogame, we discuss how games can be a tool that supports cultural and language revitalization. In this way, a community developed video game for language revitalization can stand as a symbol of, as Leisy Thornton Wyman describes, linguistic survivance, which is "the use of language and/or translanguaging to creatively express, adapt and maintain identities under difficult or hostile circumstances" (2).

Kisima Inŋitchuŋa **and Storytelling**

Kisima Inŋitchuŋa is a game made by Upper One Games, an Indigenous-owned game studio of the Cook-Inlet Tribal Council. Several Alaska Elders contributed to building the video game. The game has single-player and cooperative functions. Throughout the gameplay, the player plays as Nuna, a young Iñupiaq girl, and also Fox, a creature that can communicate with spirits in the arctic of Alaska. Nuna and Fox must overcome many challenges together to save Nuna's village from a terrible winter storm. Players must either switch between Nuna and Fox or play cooperatively, embodying both characters to overcome various puzzles and challenges. Together, the player(s), Nuna, and the Fox encounter characters from Iñupiaq stories. The game is narrated in the Iñupiaq language with subtitles in English. Throughout the game, Nuna and Fox unlock cultural insights, which add intricate detail to the game world, and to the player(s)' understanding of Iñupiaq language, culture, and way of life. The narration of *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa* is in the Iñupiaq language and recounted by James (Mumiġan) Nageak. The player enters the world of the Iñupiaq people through Nageak's words; a world that may be different from their own (Gaertner; Longboat, "Never Alone - Homepage").

In his analysis of *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*, Warren Cariou brings to light the similarities between video games and Indigenous storytelling:

> I had often thought that Indigenous stories would make amazing video games, since they are filled with such drama, transformations, unseen dangers and unexpected gifts. They also contain teachings that tell us about how to survive in our contemporary world by giving us the wisdom of the generations that have come before. While video games don't necessarily undertake the pedagogical task that traditional oral stories do, there is definitely a potential for such teaching within the medium of gaming. (Cariou)

Video games in this sense are viewed for their potential to teach skills that are livable and pertinent to a community's survivance. Cariou sees video games as a medium for cultural transmission through storytelling and through the game's interactivity:

> I don't believe that video games can entirely *replace* storytelling as a means of cultural transmission and resurgence, but I do think they can supplement the work of oral stories in many ways, and I feel they can do so particularly through their staging of the player's performance within the world of the game. What is labeled as the "interactivity" of gaming is, for me, very similar to the relational aspects of storytelling. (Cariou)

Cariou sees the importance of storytelling as existing within lived human experience, and relinquishes the concept that video games can outright replace storytelling in communities. He understands video games, just like storytelling, as a medium that is "disruptive, sustaining, knowledge producing, and theory-in-action" (Sium and Ritskes 2). Cariou makes the link that cultural knowledge within communities can be transmitted across time and generations in mediums that are sometimes deemed less traditional. Cariou is correct in saying that video games can take on the role of teaching and learning as Frans Mäyrä argues that playing games can lead to teachings and finding commonalities between the player and the messages in games. He argues that:

> playing is a form of understanding. We can decode messages that carry information in unconventional forms by simple trial-and-error behaviors, as the feedback we derive from our interaction tells us whether we have understood each other or not. (Mäyrä 14)

While playing through the video game, the player encounters the way of life of the Iñupiaq. The video game "contains the teachings within an experience that is active, reciprocal (the technological term for this being 'interactive'), embodied and repeatable" (Cariou). These

repeatable actions are similar to how Indigenous stories exist through time and space. As stories are embodied and repeated through the act of storytelling they are transformed in present contexts. Video games, for example, could be considered one of these present contexts. David Gaertner sees video gaming as a way for Indigenous storytellers to "shift and adapt traditional narratives in new contexts and mediums without sacrificing meaning or faithfulness to the past." Although the medium between storytelling differs greatly, storytellers have always shifted between the "diverse memories of the visual past into the experiences and metaphors of the present" (Vizenor 7). Indigenous storytelling can be laden with nuanced teachings that must be interpreted by the listener and requires the listener to displace their current position in time and space. In many Indigenous communities, a "story is a living thing, an organic process, a way of life" (Graveline 66). Video games, as a medium of Indigenous storytelling, can exist as a way to tell stories that are "inclusive of the past, present, and future, as well as the current or contemporary moment and the story reality, without losing context and coherence while maintaining the drama" (Armstrong 194). In *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*, the player discovers temporal and spatial aspects of storytelling, and through continuous gameplay (re)lives the community's stories. By playing the game, the story is reflected upon the player's non-digital world and in the player's present context. With *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*, storytelling is presented through a new medium while the faithfulness to the Iñupiaq story is maintained.

Relationality, Survivance, and Linguistic Survivance

The use of technology in Indigenous communities is often tied to processes of reclaiming identity, decolonization, and self-determination. Technology is also implicated in shaping, or shifting, iterations of traditional and ancestral ways of being. In many communities Elders continue to teach cultural knowledge, and technology is complementing education and knowledge transfer. Use of technology is often aligned with these communities' goals of self-determination (Monroe 290-294). In Canada, Indigenous peoples are often "[drawing] on their resources as members of politically autonomous nations to assert control over digital infrastructure development" (McMahon 2003). To do so, Indigenous people must have a say in how media represents not only images of themselves but also ideological constructs that are rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing. For example, in his discussion of *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*, Maize Longboat highlights how the Iñupiaq community has taken control over digital

infrastructure that represents their community and "love for life in all of its forms", specifically in a medium that has historically portrayed Indigenous people negatively:

> The game is one of the most recent, movement-leading examples of how Indigenous communities are currently deconstructing the mainstream gaming industry's negative stereotypes to serve their own purposes of cultural revitalization, intra community education for younger generations, and the reeducation of the global gaming public… Considering the fact that the Iñupiat community has utilized the video game medium that is foreign to Indigenous community practices in many ways, their desire to represent themselves within a genre that has done so much to erase Indigenous peoples as a whole communicates how *Never Alone* has the capability of subverting dominant narratives in meaningful ways. (Longboat)

Longboat's comments are especially important considering the fact that many video games today reflect imperialistic attitudes that contribute to the othering of Indigenous people and represent territorial conquest in a positive way (Patel). Considering Longboat's statements, a video game can include an Indigenous community's values, which transforms the landscapes that are still dominated by colonial powers.

Shawn Wilson describes the importance of the relationships that lie "at the heart of what it means to be Indigenous" (80). Specifically, Wilson highlights the concept of relationality as the complex connections between people, land, the cosmos, and ideas. These relationships are sacred and critical to Indigenous knowledge production and acquisition, for informing other relationships, pedagogical approaches to sharing knowledges, methods of connecting people to place, understanding humanity, and understanding that knowledge is cultural (86-96). In a Canadian context, this relationality has been damaged by assimilation practices such as Indian Residential Schools and the Sixties Scoop.[1] In line with various conventions and declarations such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Final Calls to Action, education is positioned as a critical site of resistance, reconciliation, and of transcending the past and present marginalization of Indigenous peoples through physically and culturally violent colonial processes. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms aims to grant Indigenous people of Canada the right to the use of their language, yet imperial colonial understandings of education "deny the use and development of [Indigenous peoples'] own world views and thought through the suppression of

Indigenous languages and cultures in schools, and confine education to Western methodologies and approaches" (Battiste 142). Many Indigenous peoples are struggling to negotiate a space for Indigenous pedagogical strategies, cultural education, and knowledge protection within a hostile social, political, and economic system founded on colonization. This negotiation is changing what it means to be Indigenous in Canada:

> Being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one's relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization. Whether through ceremony or through other ways that Indigenous peoples (re)connect to the natural world, processes of resurgence are often contentious and reflect the spiritual, cultural, economic, social and political scope of the struggle. (Corntassel 88)

Resurgence, reclaiming relationality, and renewing connection to language and culture are all part of the process that Gerald Vizenor termed *survivance* (survival and resistance). Survivance reflects "an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent" (Vizenor, *"Aesthetics of Survivance"* 1). This process foregrounds Indigenous ways of knowing and embodies lived resistance to colonial ideologies that privilege Western paradigms, epistemologies, and ontological constructs (Vizenor, *Manifest manners*). Extending on Vizenor's concept, Leisly Thornton Wyman terms *linguistic survivance* as the presence and continual use of a community's ancestral language despite oppressing colonial measures that contribute to its endangerment (54). These movements and resurgences are spiritual and are "a culturally rooted *social* movement that transforms the whole society and a political action that seeks to remake the entire landscape of power and relationship to reflect a truly liberated post-imperial vision" (Alfred 30).

Video games can be a medium for teaching and can be used for fostering individual and collective action, as a demonstration of survivance, and can be a space for the acknowledgement and discussion of social issues. Video games can be used to introduce players to differing, unfamiliar worldviews in a safe environment, where the risk, and price, of failure is low. For example, in *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*, the risk of taking an action, such as confronting a polar bear head-on, is low since a player's death will revive them in a location nearby. The player learns that the only way to defeat the polar bear is to work cooperatively. Players are not discouraged by defeat but rather encouraged to try again by adopting novel strategies to defeating an enemy

or overcoming a challenge in a world that may seem unfamiliar. Mitigating the risk that might accompany these types of experiences in 'real-world' contexts allows players to learn new ways to look at the world and to explore ideas about the construction of identity, and potential to reimagine themselves in relation to the challenges presented in-game (Stokes et al. 4-7). Games also allow players to experiment with different ideologies and explore and challenge their own moral and ethical framework (Swain 806). For example, Elizabeth LaPensée's game *Survivance* allows players to represent themselves and create meaningful change in their life through their own acts:

> *Survivance* is a game in which Indigenous players are given the space to represent themselves as they see fit and to explore the representations that other players put out into the world in the form of acts of survivance. The quests encourage ethical behaviors in a way that is intrinsic—the game does not literally tell players "make ethical choices," but rather walks players through a process of exploring their communal wellbeing in a way that leads to culturally relevant ethics. This inherent design is what makes true change possible. (27)

A player's demonstration of survivance gives power to their own voices by creating their own change, as the player decides how to best represent themselves.

Video games that incorporate Indigenous narratives, a game such as *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*, stand as a rupture of the ideas and values of colonial understandings of time and space. Just like oral stories, Indigenous narratives in video games "work to not only regenerate Indigenous traditions and knowledge production, but also work against the colonial epistemic frame to subvert and recreate possibilities and space for resistance" (Sium and Ritskes 2). Likewise, Indigenous stories stand as a form of colonial resistance and as acts of survivance, since they "affirm that the subjectivity of Indigenous peoples is both politically and intellectually valid. Indigenous stories also proclaim that Indigenous peoples still exist, that the colonial project has ultimately been unsuccessful in erasing Indigenous existence" (4).

Splatsin First Nation and Language Endangerment

The Splatsin First Nation is the southernmost member of the Secwepemc (Shuswap) Nation. Some of the earliest ethnographic accounts of the Splatsin people can be found in the publication *The Shuswap*, published by James Alexander Teit in 1909 as part of the Jesup North Pacific

Expedition (JNPE) directed by anthropologist Franz Boas. The Splatsin live along the Eagle, Salmon, and Shuswap Rivers, and today practice traditional hunting, fishing, and often hold culture camps for sharing traditional knowledge along these waterways (Cooperman; Morrison). Their reserve lands are located next to Enderby, British Columbia, and along the Shuswap River (Shuswap Nation Tribal Council). The Shuswap River is central to the community members' lives as it:

> forms a Splatsin social hub during many months of the year. Splatsin people gather at the Enderby Bridge, on river beaches, and at camps along the river. The river is a travel corridor, a place of spiritual activities and cleansing rituals, and where horses are watered. The Shuswap River is the aesthetic centre of Splatsin culture for it forms a central component of traditional stories and oral histories. (McIlwraith 173)

The language of the Splatsin people is an eastern dialect of the Secwepemctsín (Shuswap) language of the Interior Salish language family. The Secwepemctsín dialects are endangered as a whole and have 1,190 semi-speakers (Ethnologue), although Splatsin's Secwepemctsín dialect is significantly more endangered. Less than 1% of over 800 band members are speakers (FirstVoices). According to the Language Needs Assessment of the First Peoples' Heritage Language & Culture Council, in 2014 there were 8 speakers that understood Secwepemctsín fluently, all of whom are over the age of 65. There were 14 speakers that understood and/or spoke Secwepemctsín somewhat, and there were 63 people that were learning Secwepemctsín. 835 band members at the time of the report did not speak or understand Secwepemctsín (First Peoples' Heritage Language & Culture Council). Since this report, some Elders who were fluent speakers of the language have passed away.

Although not the only criteria for assessing endangered languages, language researchers have suggested that in order for a language to be considered safe, it would require between 20,000 and 100,000 speakers (Ottenheimer; Krauss). In order to increase the number of fluent speakers, the Splatsin community has been in the process of revitalizing Secwepemctsín since the 1970s (FirstVoices). The Splatsin community has been affected greatly by the Indian Residential School act, as well as the Sixties Scoop (as mentioned above), and this has greatly accelerated the endangerment of the Splatsin's language and culture. In order to mitigate the age discrepancy between fluent speakers of the language and youth, the community has put in place initiatives to revitalize their language, such as a language nest at the Splatsin Tsm7aksaltn (Cook

and Williams 6). A language nest program involves learning a language in immersion pre-schools. Internationally, these programs have been implemented within other indigenous communities, such as Maori and Manx Gaelic (Wilson; King). The Splatsin Child Care facility and the kikia7as (grandmothers) participate in immersion programs with the stsmamlt with the goals of teaching and documenting Secwepemctsín (Cook and Williams 6-8). Language learning in immersion occurs three days per week and there are programs that teach language and culture across age groups, such as singing, dancing, and drumming (Williams 2). The concentration on early childhood development is also an effort to heal and decolonize by supporting the Secwepemc culture and language from the beginning of a child's education (Legacy of Hope Foundation).

In view of Secwepemctsín's endangerment, we are participating in a hyperlocal project to develop a video game for the Splatsin First Nation community. We are engaging in dialogue, improving the livelihood of the local area, and fostering and reinforcing a sense of, and connection to, place and community at a grassroots level (Baines; Dungen and Genest; Hu et al.; Radcliffe). The grassroots approach and locality are also enabling us to foster language learning that is specific to the needs of the community. As such, we are considering the entire way of life of Secwepemctsín speakers, as Indigenous languages carry multiplicities of importance for those who speak them. They are the foundation of spiritual and cultural values:

> Indigenous peoples view their languages as forms of spiritual identity. Indigenous languages are thus sacred to Indigenous peoples. They provide the deep cognitive bonds that affect all aspects of Indigenous life. Through their shared language, Indigenous people create a shared belief in how the world works and what constitutes proper action. (Battiste and Henderson 49)

The goal of increasing the number of Secwepemctsín speakers is not only part of the efforts to minimize endangerment, but it also constitutes a shift in re-understanding the deeply rooted cultural and spiritual life of Splatsin. The goal of the video game is to be accessible on the most used devices in the community, and aims at revitalizing the Secwepemctsín language amongst youth. As Brittain and Mackenzie have written, youth "are the primary users and developers of technology. The language should be available in forms that are accessible and appealing to everyone, but the focus… should be on young people" (441). Video game development that aims

to teach the language and culture of Secwepemctsín, and that is aimed towards a younger audience, fits well within the goals of the Tsm7aksaltn immersion programs.

Playing Video Games and Community Meeting

A major part of our research project involves engaging with the community and ensuring that community members have a say in how the video game will be designed. The research team is doing this to ensure that the community retains control over the representation of their language and culture. Jason Edward Lewis points out that such a level of collaboration and engagement is important so that Indigenous people have a say in how new media is shaped and formed:

> By engaging in the conversation that is shaping new media systems and structures, Native people can claim an agency in how that shaping carries forward and, by acting as agents, not only can we help to expand the epistemological assumptions upon which those systems and structures are based but we can stake out our own territory in a common future. (63)

On April 11th 2016, we held a community meeting with gamer stsmamlt and parents. We placed three computers, a PlayStation 4, and a Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) around the Splatsin Tsm7aksaltn for the gamers to play. We had various types of games, such as Mortal Kombat, Super Mario 3, and *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa* for the gamers to play. We avoided overly violent games and first-person shooters because we felt as though these games were not appropriate and conducive to the learning environment of the Splatsin Tsm7aksaltn. We provided pizza, pop, and healthy snacks to contribute to an atmosphere similar to a Local Area Network (LAN) party common in video game culture. Parents and their gamer stsmamlt took turns playing games, sharing strategies, and commenting on their favorite games past and present. Having several generations of consoles around the room provided an opportunity for parents to comment on how video games have changed and for gamers to question the graphics and mechanics of video games that they take for granted in modern consoles. As the gamers played, we asked questions about some of their favorite games. Parents also got involved in asking their gamer stsmamlt questions pertaining to the games that were being played. Parents would often question their gamer stsmamlt in-game decisions, and would have the gamers reflect on their gaming experience. Parents were often very surprised and impressed with how well their gamer stsmamlt adapted to the game mechanics and customization. Gamer stsmamlt were also

surprised that their parents knew how to play video games. Gamers stsmamlt would turn to their parents for in-game advice and opinions, such as which avatar would best represent their parents, who their favorite characters are, and for help to get through very difficult levels. Overall, the evening was inspiring for community members and researchers and it encouraged the gamer stsmamlt and parents to talk about the value of video games, video game culture over time, and Indigenous languages and culture. Parents were excited by the prospect of our project, and they were very happy with how we have engaged the community thus far, and the amount of responses we received for the community meeting. Parents commented on how video game nights were a good opportunity for the community to come together and share food and do something engaging, and that we should continue engaging the community in this way.[2] For example, one parent said,

> These kind of nights are really good for the kids and the families… sometimes space is kind of a problem, and for communities to get together, this was a really nice night. (So more nights like this in general?) Yeah, that would be really good. (18:15)

After an hour of gameplay, we broke off into a sharing circle to talk about our experiences with video games. Many of the gamers said that *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa* was one of their favorite games:

> I know my favorite game (What game is that?) Never Alone. (Never Alone is your favorite game? Why's that?) It actually shows what happens in the Arctic. It's like you have to learn about how the [Iñupiaq] live and getting chased by a polar bear or something like that (So you like the cultural stuff in video games?) Mhm. (Do you wish you could see more cultural stuff in video games?) Yeah. (14:45)

Gamers commented that learning about the Iñupiaq people reflected what they were learning in school about the Inuit people:

> I'm starting to learn about the Inuit, and we're also reading a book about the Inuit [in school]. (20:35)

The players celebrated victories in the game, such as receiving the *bola,* the weapon that is used throughout the game*:*

> Me and Quintessa just got a weapon! Some blue thing! (2:30)

Kisima Inŋitchuŋa was very popular during the community meeting and gamer stsmamlt wanted to play the game at home:

> (Talking about Never Alone) Mom? (You can play that again sometime?) Can you download it at home? (We will have to get it but yeah, probably.) Please mom? Mommy? Can you please download it at home? (22:50)

Towards the end of the community meeting we projected *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa* on a screen in the center of the room while the other gamers took turns playing the game. Parents and the other gamers watched, shared strategies, and even teased each other during a challenge where players had to defeat a polar bear. The players and the spectators embodied both characters of Nuna and Fox while overcoming a difficult part of the game:

> You have to jump over him! How do you attack? You gotta go the other way! Where's the other way? Run, Run! There you go! You gotta go the other way! Woah! Oh, I want to play. Well I know, you gotta wait until the fox comes [to play co-op mode]. I can probably play on that one. You've got to wait until the fox comes. Can me and you take turns?... I thought you understood it! Go go! Quick! Duck! Oh no you drowned! (32:55)

Kisima Inŋitchuŋa's co-operative play, whether it is players taking turns playing as the Iñupiaq girl, Nuna, or two players co-operatively playing both Nuna and Fox, encourages players to see themselves in relation to the reciprocal values of the Iñupiaq culture (Longboat). Stsmamlt understood this component of the game, and one stsmamlt commented on how it was her favorite part:

> (What's your favorite part of [*Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*]?) There's teamwork, you never just leave someone alone. (11:10)

The stsmamlt understood that the game is played cooperatively, and that the game requires the player to switch between two characters, Nuna and the Fox, to complete the game:

> That fox right there, he's going to help you! (31:50)

The community members took notice of how the game reflected the Iñupiaq language and culture and community members commented on how that contributed to the aesthetics of the game. Two parents discussed this fact:

> You can hear the wind, and then when the language comes on it's [in Iñupiaq] and it has video clips too (oh really?) yeah (cool, oh yeah okay). (3:25)

The community meeting was an opportunity for community members to play together and have fun. Jeroen Jansz and Lonneke Martens have examined player engagement with video

games at LAN parties. Their research found that LAN parties are social in nature and allowed participants to find out more about gaming and gaming culture. They found that gaming as a group is more enjoyable and rewarding than gaming in solitude. They show that video games are not just an "activity enjoyed by an isolated adolescent" (350). Similarly, Garry Crawford and Jason Rutter found that gaming serves many social functions including transmission of knowledge, which may have positive effects on the player beyond the video game interface. Crawford and Rutter argue:

> gameplay can also act as a resource for social performances that are not based exclusively on gaming. In particular, knowledge and information gained from digital gaming can be used to inform conversations or social interactions based around other subject matter (279).

The conversations that were had at the community meeting demonstrate this level of engagement, and how video games can play a role in bringing the community together in a positive way while teaching important values such as reciprocity.

Playing a video game such as *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*, one that represents an Indigenous group's language and culture, engaged the Splatsin First Nation community. Gamers were happy to see Indigenous culture and language reflected in a game. Although the language and culture of the Iñupiaq people differs greatly from Splatsin's Secwepemc language and culture, gamers and their parents reflected on the potential to see representations of themselves in video games. Throughout the meeting, they offered suggestions that we should use traditional stories for the game that our team will develop. We will consider these suggestions and ask other community members for their input on how this could be done. Throughout gameplay, all attendees of the community meeting participated in the narrative of *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*; the stories of the Iñupiaq were retold in the context of the community meeting, and the community members displayed agency in the game world through playing, observing, and commenting on the game. The community meeting was critical in understanding how to best represent the values of the Splatsin community in a video game. It was also critical in understanding how a community may come together and learn about language and culture through a video game. The research team plans on hosting more meetings and these meetings will play a crucial role as the game itself is developed.

Conclusion

From the engagement of Splatsin First Nation community members with the video game *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*, we found that by playing a video game, those that are engaged with video games are not only players, but also those that are watching the gameplay. In terms of the community-based project of developing a video game for Splatsin First Nation, we must consider the potential for a video game to be played in a group setting. Our observations confirm that when played in groups, games can create an environment for sharing language while talking about the game (Baltra 447). The video game we are developing for Splatsin First Nation and the Secwepemctsín language is in the early stages of development. The goal of the video game is to teach Secwepemctsín and will reflect values that are important to the community just as *Kisima Inŋitchuŋa* does. It was first and foremost the community's choice to develop a game to teach the language. The video game, once developed, will have engaged as many community members as possible. Its development will stand as a community project, and as a symbol of how Secwepemctsín can occupy areas that have, in the past, represented Indigenous people poorly. Despite the colonial processes that have endangered Splatsin's Secwepemctsín dialect, the community is coming together to work on a project that represents their language and culture in a way that is relevant to the community's understandings and needs. They are building a game that will foster the relationships that are sacred and critical to the continuance of Splatsin's language and culture. Leisly Thornton Wyman builds on Vizenor's concept of Survivance to claim that linguistic survivance is the continuous use and presence of language in light of processes of globalization (54). Survivance of a community through language and cultural revitalization focuses not on "loss but renewal and continuity into the future rather than memorializing the past" (Kroeber 25). In this sense, the video game will stand as a symbol of both survivance and linguistic survivance. The video game will exist for current generations and generations to come and will demonstrate how a community has come together and determined how digital infrastructure represents their language and community.

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Notes

[1] The Sixties Scoop is a term first used by Johnston in *Native children and the child welfare system* to describe the government process of forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their families and communities and placing them in the child welfare system and in the foster care of white families. The Splatsin community was particularly affected by this process and has launched a lawsuit in 2015 against the BC government for not upholding a community child welfare bylaw. This bylaw was passed in response to the Sixties Scoop to ensure that the Splatsin First Nation retains jurisdiction over the welfare of the community's children (Helston).
[2] The researchers decided to record the community meeting and consent was obtained from all participants. The evening was very exciting and it was difficult to discern the speakers of these quotes. However, all participants in the video game night participated and had a very enjoyable evening.

Video Games in this article

Kisima Inŋitchuŋa (Never Alone) – Upper One Games, http://neveralonegame.com/

Survivance – Elizabeth LaPensée, http://survivance.org/

Idle No More: Blockade – Chelsea Vowel, http://apihtawikosisan.com/tag/idle-no-more-game/

Spirits of Spring – Minority Media, http://www.weareminority.com/spirits-of-spring/

Mortal Kombat – Midway Games

Super Mario 3 – Nintendo

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